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ON THE
TRADE
IN
WOOL AND WOOLLENS,
INCLUDING
AN EXPOSITION
OF THE
COMMERCIAL SITUATION OF THE BRITISH
EMPIRE.

*Extracted from the Reports addressed to the Wool-Meetings at Leices,
In the Years 1809, 1810, 1811, and 1812,*

BY THE PRESIDENT,
JOHN, LORD SHEFFIELD,

FROM THE
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE.

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1813.

ON THE

TRADE

WOOL AND WOOLLENS

INCLUDING



COMMERCIAL HISTORY OF THE BRITISH

EMPIRE

IN THE YEARS 1800, 1810, 1820, AND 1830

BY THE EDITOR

JOHN, LORD SHILLY

FROM THE

COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

DE BUN

1818

ON THE

TRADE IN WOOL, &c.

SINCE I had the pleasure of meeting you last year, there has been a great variation in the price of wool. Previously to that meeting, in consequence of the distrust which arose in respect to the American States, and the disordered state of the continent, our manufactures suffered a depression, more considerable than at any former period of the war: and assisted by much misrepresentation, the price of wool was kept down; but towards winter, the price rose rapidly, and afterwards to an extent never experienced before. I stated at our last wool fair, and in confident terms, that such would be the case. It was not difficult to foresee it; and I particularly represented, that there was no foundation for the supposition that the manufactures of the finest wools (now principally under our consideration) were essentially prejudiced by the war, as the sale depends almost entirely on the home

market, and comparatively very little on the export to the continent of Europe. I wish to bring to your recollection that *the home demand is the great support of all our manufactures!* Little argument can be deduced from the extravagant prices of wool, during the greater part of last winter and spring. It was evidently occasioned by wool-dealers speculating on the scanty supply of Spanish wool, and on the article being in few hands; however it is certain, that the value of wool is much higher than it has been of late years. With respect to our woollen trade in general, there is no doubt that it will be considerably better than it was last year. The American Non-importation Act, which was in a great degree ineffectual, is at least suspended for the present; a great exportation thither now takes place. Several other channels are found for our manufactures, and whatever was deficient in the demand for them in preceding years, will be amply compensated by the future demand; for they must be had somewhere, and the manufactures of the continent are certainly greatly reduced, and prejudiced by revolution and war. The principal apprehension is, whether our manufacturers will be enabled to procure an adequate supply of the raw material. Whatever check or decline takes place in the excellent manufactures of fine wool in the west of England, does not arise entirely from the scarcity

and high price of Spanish wool, but partly from the high wages, which are likely to transfer the manufacture to the less luxurious manufacturers of Yorkshire. It has been generally supposed that the manufacturers of woollens in the West Riding, have been greatly hurt by the war, and especially last year, by the impolitic measures of the American States, which were infinitely more injurious to themselves than they could possibly be to us; but it appears, that the manufacture of broad and narrow cloths (the only branch of the trade of which a precise knowledge can be obtained), last year amounted to 5,309,007 yards of narrow, and 9,050,970 yards of broad, very little less than an average of the ten preceding years, which include several years of the greatest export. And it should be observed, that notwithstanding all the declamation we have heard on the ruin of our trade, the decline in the exports of woollens of all sorts in the last year, compared with the preceding year, is only £519,282. official value.

The scanty supply of Spanish wool must very considerably raise the intrinsic value of our fine wools, which it is well known are very greatly improved within a few years; and the coat which I now wear shews that South Down wool may be used as a very good substitute for Spanish: its appearance is equally

good. I have corresponded with every part of England, where there are considerable fairs for wool. At Hereford fair, 1st of July, Ryeland wool sold at 3s. 4½d. per lb. and was supposed to be undersold; my correspondent observing that his wool had been valued at 6s. 6d. per lb. by a man in the trade; but it should be remarked, that the Herefordshire wools are trinded, and cleansed from some of their impurities. It is added, that the sellers, pleased with prices higher than usual, had sold under the real value. Mr. George Wilbraham has this year sold his Delamere Forest wool for 3s. 4d. per lb. Some had been sold as high as 3s. 6d. and one instance of 3s. 6½d. per lb. There are parts in the Delamere Forest fleeces finer than in the South Down; but the latter are more even, so that little difference is made in the price. Mr. Coke of Norfolk, who is well known to you all, as the distinguished friend of the agriculture and trade of the country, in his account of Thetford fair, 15th of July, says there was a great attendance of growers, but little or no business was done; that 2s. 8d. was generally offered for the Down wool; that some was sold at 2s. 10½d. per lb.; and that there was no doubt that 3s. will be generally given for the best. I have since learned that a considerable quantity of South Down was afterwards sold at that price. Letters from Suffolk mention that less than

80s. per todd of 28lbs., which is about 2s. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per lb., for South Down wool has been refused. Mr. Western of Essex, who is also known to many of you, as perfectly well-informed, says, that no business was done at the Colchester fair, 17th July; that no lot of a middling quality has been sold for 2s. 6d., but that the growers of the best wools will not take less than 2s. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per lb. Mr. Western sold his wool last year in Ireland at 3s. and his lambs' wool at 1s. 9d.: his factor says it will sell for 3s. 6d. this year. Even the common wool in the Weald of Sussex is sold from 2s. 6d. to 2s. 9d.; and Mr. Collins of Brenchley, Kent, has refused 2s. 3d. for his wool, a mixture of Romney Marsh and South Down; and I know several instances in this county and out of it where 3s. for South Down have been refused. I have not so detailed an account of Mr. Tollet's wool as usual; but I learn from him that he has sold to the same persons who have bought his wool for several years, 843 fleeces, of which 120 were pure Merino, for £878. 10s. which is 20s. 8d. per fleece. Notwithstanding the decline in the price of Spanish wool, the best quality has been sold within a short time at 15s.; but I understand that the manufacturers in the west of England have good Spanish wool at from 8s. to 10s. per lb. I have exerted the fullest inquiry to obtain a correct opinion of the value of the wool of

this year, and after a due examination of a very extensive correspondence, the opinion I collect from it is, that 3s. appear to be a fair price for our finest wools, and so proportionably for wools of inferior quality; and I think it sufficient, because it is fully equal to 4s. when washed and brought to the state of Spanish. We should not appreciate our wool by the very contracted extent of the supply this year; but rather restrict ourselves to its intrinsic value. That value, I do not hesitate to say, the grower of fine wool has scarcely ever yet obtained. Hitherto it has been a depreciated commodity, it has seldom found an open market, and the wool-staplers have never evinced a proper degree of discrimination in respect to quality. But an advanced price has promoted, and will always secure a greater degree of care and attention to the quality of the fleece, rather than to the quantity, and unless we obtain a better price than heretofore, the weight of the fleece will be the principal object of the grower. This is a crisis in the wool trade of Britain, and by not exacting exorbitant prices, the manufacturers will be induced to use British fine wools in the place of Spanish. *If the present extravagant price of Spanish wool should induce the manufacturers to encourage by advanced prices, the growth and manufacture of British fine wools, the prejudices of the country in favour of Spa-*

nish would be soon done away ; and we should become independent of other countries for the materials of staple manufacture, and save nearly three millions sterling to this nation ; for nothing is more clearly demonstrated than that wool may be raised in England, equal in quality to any that is imported !

Expectation being very high in respect to price, Lord Sheffield mentioned 3s. which he knew had been refused by several, as a maximum for the finest wool. And he knew that price had been given in several parts of England for inferior wool ; and that he by no means meant to guide the opinion in respect to wool of an inferior quality. It has seldom happened that much business has been done on the day of the fair, the owners of the finest wools insisted on £5 per tod of 32lbs. or 3s. 1½ per lb. and there was little doubt of their obtaining at least 3s. per lb. A considerable quantity of the inferior wools was sold at 2s. 6d.

Lord Sheffield stated that his tailor, who was also his woollen-draper, and whose interest was not to over-rate the quality, had valued the cloth of the coat he then wore as worth 28s. per yard. The ma-

manufacture of the cloth, even at the present high prices, amounted to per yard - £0 6 1½

The wool at 3s. per lb. in the fleece - 0 7 0

£0 13 1½

Dyeing of drab at 3½d. per lb. - 0 1 1½

A yard of drab cloth - - 0 14 3¼

If woaled to dark blue, at 2s. per lb. 0 2 9

Manufacturing and wool - - 0 13 1½

A yard of blue cloth - - £0 15 10¼

Leaving, at 28s. or even 24s. per yard, a very sufficient profit to the manufacturers, drapers, &c.

Report, July 27, 1810.

My desire to acquire information that might be useful at these meetings, has been encouraged by the flattering opinion which has been expressed, that my endeavours have been serviceable, and induces me to persevere in the inquiry into the state of the woollen trade, the probable supply and quality of wool from this and other countries, and the probable demand there is likely to be for our manufacture. The perpetually changing condition of the civilized world,

its distracted and ruinous state seems to baffle inquiry, and to render it extremely difficult to offer you any satisfactory opinions ; but, if we rely on facts, and it is to them I shall principally endeavour to point your attention, reasonable conclusions may be drawn.

The increased difficulty of procuring, and the consequent high price of, Spanish wool, raised the value of British fine wool, and induced our spirited farmers to attend to the amelioration of an article which had been greatly debased and neglected, in consequence of the pernicious monopoly at home, and the permission to import wool free of all duties from every part of the world. Depreciation and neglect of course raised a prejudice against the use of it in our finer manufactures, and it was no longer worth the while of our wool growers to attend to the quality, but to aim at the greatest weight or quantity. The adequate price now given for British fine wool has had a surprising effect, and the wool of our principal South Down flocks is infinitely better than it was a few years ago : so much so that, with the help of the Spanish breed of sheep so rapidly increasing in the *United Kingdom*, and for which we are particularly indebted to his Majesty, there can be little

doubt that this country may become independent of all others as to the supply of wool of all kinds.

The export of superfine cloths, compared with inferior manufactures, is not considerable, and the great bulk of our woollen manufacture has been of British wool, especially for exportation. Those of Spanish wool are principally for home consumption, which, however, is the best market. Very good superfine cloth is made of South Down wool, and is very sufficient for the woollen manufactories of Yorkshire; and when its improved quality is better known there, it will surely come into greater demand than is the case at present, where the northern wools are generally used, and the consumption of Herefordshire and South Down wool is not very considerable. The woollen trade in the West Riding is at present very good, and there was an increase last year of 1,417,833 yards over the preceding year; 15,777,805 yards were milled within the year. The demand for low and middle priced woollens has swept away all the stock on hand, at an advance of from 5 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and of course the price of wool employed in those manufactures has advanced. Prime Spanish wool has been purchased last spring at 18s. and upwards per lb. to sell again; and in March last, the current price at Bristol, from whence

Our fine fabrics of wool in the west of England are supplied, sold at 15s. per lb. Late failures, arising from extravagant speculation, have had the effect of forcing into the market foreign wools, at prices which refer more to the difficulties of the times, than to the regular demand of the trade. It appears that in future we cannot depend on the usual importation, consequently that the price of foreign wool will continue high, and the value of British fine wools will increase in proportion to the deficiency of the importation of the former. It is computed that Buonaparte has caused many thousands of Spanish sheep to be driven into France, and it is known that a large quantity of Spanish wool is accumulated in that country; which, as it cannot come to us direct from thence, possibly some part finds its way through Germany, which has raised the importation from thence into the port of London alone for the last quarter, ending the 5th of July, to 357,608lbs.

Notwithstanding the check in the west, the lowest prices of Spanish wool of the first quality in Bristol and London, were, about the 18th of this month, Leonesa 12s. Segoviana 10s. 6d. and Soria 10s. per lb.; and at the same time prime Herefordshire was 5s. per lb. South Down of the first quality from 4s. to 4s. 6d. per lb.

At Hereford fair, the beginning of this month, fine wool sold at an advance from last year of 3s. per stone of 12lbs.: 4s. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. was refused for wool of the Ryeland and Spanish cross, and some of an inferior quality sold at 4s. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Of the middling kind of wool a great deal remained unsold. Mr. Clive sold his wool, (which is pure Ryeland with a slight mixture of Merino,) at 4s. per lb. The prime Ryeland sold at 3s. 7d. inferior Ryeland at 2s. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb.; but it is said the Ryeland breed is so generally mixed with the Leicester, to promote the increase of mutton, that the wool no longer retains its pre-eminence, and that the South Down being considerably improved in quality, (especially if trinded and made up in the same manner,) is worth more in fact than the Ryeland sold at Hereford or Ross fairs. Most of the Herefordshire wool is sold to Gloucestershire clothiers.

At Ross wool fair on the 20th inst. the best Ryeland trinded wool sold from 3s. 2d. to 3s. 10d. per lb. One of my correspondents expects 5s. 9d. per lb. for his wool, which is very fine; hardly any Merino Ryeland was offered, and coarse wools were very low.

There is no regular fair for wool in Cheshire, but I learn from Mr. George Wilbraham of Delamere

Forest, who is well acquainted with the subject, that the prices of the fleeces of that Forest vary very much from 3s. 6d. to 4s. 3d. per lb. which is a rise of $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ per lb. since last year. He observes the Delamere Forest fleece is finer than the South Down, but not so even throughout, and that it works well with the Spanish;—a convincing proof of the fineness of the pile; as does also the South Down, of which a considerable quantity has of late been carded with the Spanish in mills made for the purpose. He sold his wool this year, consisting of 235 South Down, 78 Delamere, and 30 mixed Merino, at 4s. $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ per lb. and one of his neighbours sold Forest and South Down at 4s. and mixed Merino at 5s $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ per lb.: all these wools are bought up for the Yorkshire manufactories. I understand Mr. Tollet has sold his wool of Spanish mixture at 6s. per lb. including, however, one-sixth part or thereabouts of prime Merino.

Thetford fair was better attended than usual; many wool buyers came from Yorkshire, who admitted there was no stock of wool in the West Riding; but little business was done at the fair. The growers of best South Down, and fine English wools expect 3s. 6d. per lb. when the small farmers, who cannot wait for better prices, have disposed of their wool. Mr. Coke

informs me he has sold 774 fleeces, half-bred South Down and Ryeland by a Merino ram, at 4s. 6d. per lb. It does not appear that much business was done at Colchester wool fair.

At Dorchester fair in Oxfordshire, the whole of the wool brought there was sold. The best South Down there sold at 2s. 5d. per lb.; but it is much inferior in quality to our prime wool. Common Berkshire wool sold better than last year.

At the wool sale at London Wall I understand much business was not done. The Duke of Bedford sold some lots of pure South Down at 3s. 1d. and other lots at 3s. 2d. per lb. Mr. Ellman refused 3s. 3d. per lb. for his wool.

Some time after the last fair held at this place twelve months ago, the price of South Down wool rose very considerably, notwithstanding the vehement assertions, that the market was greatly overstocked, and that the wool staplers could not dispose of their stocks. The prime wool sold soon after the fair from 3s. 1½d. to 3s. 6d. and upwards. Mr. Price of Lyminge, in Kent, sold his South Down wool at 3s. 6d. per lb. And it should be observed, that he has no Down—he has only artificial grasses and a few grass fields: he

keeps above 300 ewes, and Mr. Honeywood sold his wool of the same kind at the like price. But the South Down wool in Ireland, sold there last Summer by auction, greatly surpassed any price we ever heard of in this country; it sold from 5s. 1d. to 8s. 6d. per lb.

Mr. Tollet of Staffordshire, who has for a considerable time, and very ably, promoted the growth of fine wool in England (by breeding Spanish sheep, and by crossing them with fine woolled English sheep), has sold his whole lot of wool this year at 6s. per lb. His flock consisted of 711, of which 140 were pure Merino, the rest deep crosses upon the Ryeland: 711 fleeces weighed 3128lbs. which at 6s. came to £1 6s. 4½d. per fleece, taking the flock through.

The official value of woollen manufactures exported last year is £5,416,151, which is £562,152 more than the preceding year. The trade in general greatly exceeded that of former years, viz. the exports of 1808 were £34,554,267, and in 1809 they rose to £50,101,763, and the general commerce of the country never flourished to the degree it does at present.

Under all these circumstances, namely, the increase of the woollen manufacture in Yorkshire, the extraordinary increase of our foreign trade, and the failure

or great decrease of a future supply from Spain; as the quantity produced there will be greatly diminished in consequence of its devastation by war, and the ruined state of its flocks; and that the reduction of the price of Spanish wool, owing to the late failures, and extraordinary importation, should not materially affect the price of South Down wool, which is the principal object of our consideration, and which appears to be 3s. 4½d. per lb. from an average of the prices of that article sold since the failures, and within the present month, in the several parts of the kingdom. I have avoided all consideration of coarse or long wools, not wishing to perplex the subject with any thing that did not belong to it; I have made little inquiry, but I understand the sale is very dull. The Spanish breed is rapidly spreading over the kingdom, and also the breed of British fine woolled sheep, which must diminish the growth of coarse wool, and consequently the value of an article so necessary to many essential manufactures will rise.

If my opinion respecting the price of South Down wool is desired, I should (notwithstanding the average value within the present month throughout the kingdom was 3s. 4½d. per lb.) recommend under all the circumstances, and for the encouragement of the fair, and the dispatch of business, 3s. per lb. for

such bargains as may be made this day; but I am satisfied that those to whom it may be convenient, and who wish to reserve their wool, will have a better price; and that in future, when the present stock of foreign wool is disposed of, that our farmers who have attended to the quality of their wool, will never fail to obtain a very good price for it.

Report, July 26th, 1811.

THE continued extravagant conduct of the enemy, infinitely more hurtful to the countries under his protection than it is to us, has greatly deranged trade and intercourse among nations; yet the distress which has fallen on this country, did not arise merely from the efforts of the enemy; much has been done through precipitate and mischievous speculations, as well as as by the dissemination of notions, tending to destroy confidence, and to prejudice the credit of the country; for, notwithstanding the asserted decay of the woollen trade, in consequence of the war, I trust I shall be able to prove that the export of woollens has increased, and that the consumption at home must also be greater than ever it has been. It will be necessary to remark at some length on the enormous importations for several years past of foreign wool, which, not without reason, has occasioned a great de-

gree of alarm among the wool-growers of the United Kingdom.

The total importation of foreign wool into England, in the year 1808 amounted to 2,353,725 lbs. being only one-fifth of the amount of the import in the preceding year. Most of it arrived before the close of the Spring; and the French having possessed themselves, about that time, of the principal ports of exportation in Spain, it early became evident that further supplies would not arrive. The staplers and wool-factors immediately began to speculate upon this expectation, which ultimately proved to be correct. The speculators, some of whom already held considerable stocks, part of the extraordinary import of 1807, purchased every bag as it was offered for sale. Previously to those speculations, Spanish wool sold at the following prices; *viz.* Leonesas, 6s. 9d.; Segovias, 6s. to 6s. 6d.; and Sorias, 5s. to 5s. 9d., at a credit of eight months; but the prices were rapidly enhanced, and during the first six months of 1809, Leonesas were sold at 25s.; Segovias, 21s.; and Sorias, 18s. per lb. It is said that the foreign wools had cost the merchant 10s. per lb., and that they were, for the most part, in the hands of a few men of large capitals. Very many, who had imprudently engaged in the speculation, were ruined; whereas, immense profits were made by those who

had purchased at the low rates of 1808, and contrived to sell the whole of their stock at very high prices, and then retired from the market.—Since that memorable speculation, Spanish wools have gradually declined in price. The manufacturer having no disposition to buy a larger quantity than his immediate necessities required, which was less than usual, in consequence of a considerable suspension of the manufacture, during the latter part of 1809 and beginning of 1810; and the import of wool, in 1809, being 6,845,338 lbs., and in the early part of 1810, much greater than at any anterior correspondent period, Spanish wools were, at length, reduced to their former prices. The total quantity of foreign wool, imported in 1810, was 10,936,224 lbs. being above one-half more than an average import at the end of the last century, and inferior only to the extraordinary import of 1807, when the Spaniards, under an apprehension of impending political convulsion, sent here all the wool they could collect, to preserve it from the hands of the French. This large importation in 1810, and the embarrassed circumstances of commercial men, produced a still further reduction in the prices, and in January and February last they were very low.—Speculation then recommenced. The purchases of prime qualities, in the month of May and June last, have been very great; chiefly of last

year's import, the spring importation, usually the season when the entries are most numerous, not being very considerable. Leonesas have readily sold at 8s. to 8s. 6d. per lb.; but this advance in prime wools has not much affected the inferior sorts, of which, it is said, there is fully two years' consumption on hand; the price asked for Segovias is 6s. and for Sorias, 5s. per lb. and not much is sold even at those prices. As the prime fleeces, however, are now taken out of the market, and in the hands of those who will not sell at low prices, the manufacturers of superfine cloths may resort to the next or inferior qualities, which will probably raise their price.

Prime English sorted wool, previously to 1809, was generally estimated at half the price of the finest Spanish wool; that is, when the latter was selling at 6s. 9d. per lb. the English wool was worth 3s. 4d.; but, in consequence of the late speculations, it sold at 6s. For some time after the great failures among the wool-staplers, comparatively little was sold; but considerable quantities have been disposed of lately, at prices, however, much reduced, and lower than they have been, during several years; prime South Down, in the fleece, at from 2s. to 2s. 3d. per lb. The principal growers of English wool, not having sold the growth of last year, there must be a large

quantity on hand; there is very little, however, in the hands of the manufacturers, who seldom keep any large stock. Although many of the staplers of English wool are very wealthy, few of them, at present, have money unemployed; their capital is not at command, it is partly locked up in the estates of those who have suspended payment, or become bankrupts; consequently, they have not the means of increasing their stock, and the lack of money obliges many of them to sacrifice the stock they have. Nothing has tended more to cripple and distress this description of persons, as well as many others, than the general withdrawing of discounts by all banks, the result of the publication of the Bullion Committee's Report; and the gloom which has prevailed among commercial men, has induced them to purchase much more sparingly than formerly.

When the prices of wool had been so extravagantly enhanced by speculation, the manufacturer, as usual, laid on his fabrics double the amount of the rise in the cost of the material; and the speculations in wool were closely followed by speculations in cloths. Even 40s. and upwards per yard were demanded by the drapers for blue cloths, and for a considerable time they obtained for them 34s. to 36s. per yard. But the high prices of Spanish wool, and of the cloth,

after a few months checked the manufacture; there was more economy in the use of it, and inferior cloths were worn. Superfine blue cloths have since been reduced to their former prices, *viz.* about 24s. per yard. At this time, the manufactures in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Somersetshire, and their neighbourhoods, are in general employed, and as it is called, at fair work, on the finest Spanish wools. The consumption of superfine cloths made of that wool, has been almost entirely by British subjects, and no considerable quantity has ever been exported to foreign countries. Superfine woollens are actually scarce, in consequence of the late suspension of the manufacture; and there can be no doubt that this branch of the manufacture will resume its former flourishing state, while Spanish wool is at its present moderate price. As to the state of the woollen trade in Yorkshire, I learn that the stock of unsold goods on hand was much greater than usual: that the best sorted English wool, which was lately sold at 5s. 5d. per lb. now sells at 3s. 4d. to 3s. 8d. All the lower sorts have fallen in that district, but as their advance was less, their fall has been comparatively not so great. The best Spanish wool, which was once, in that part of the country, at 15s. and upwards, is now at 7s.; but Spaniah fleeces by no means form a principal part of the wools worked up in Yorkshire.

The official value of woollen manufactures exported last year, viz. £5,773,214. exceeds the value of the exports of the year 1809, by £350,000. and those of that year considerably exceeded the exports of the preceding year.—The average exports of the last forty years, which includes the most flourishing period of our trade, is £4,662,523. considerably more than £1,000,000. below the exports of last year; but these, it should be observed, are the official, not the real values. They, however, answer the purpose of comparison. The real value would probably amount to nearly double. I learn, also, there is no diminution of the exports of woollen manufacture in the first quarter of this year. The exports of cloth to America, in the early part of the present year, were very great, probably in anticipation of the American prohibitions being again enforced; but cautious dealers detained their goods, which were not ready in time to reach America, before the 2d of February, and have them on hand, whilst those who ventured to ship in our ports till the 1st of February, succeeded in having them received. The East and West India demands for woollens are the same as usual, but very little business is doing with Germany, Holland, and the North of Europe. It should be observed, that France at no time took a considerable part of our woollen exports.

The average importation of wool in 19 years ending 1715; was only 869,727 lbs. and even at that time we considered woollens as our principal and most valuable manufacture. The average importation of eight years, ending 1789 (the commencement of the French revolution) was 2,660,828 lbs. The average of eight years ending 1799, was 4,020,000 lbs. and the average of eight years ending 1810 inclusive, was 7,729,929 lbs. This immense increase since 1789, must of course greatly clash with the essential interests of the landed property of the United Kingdom; for although the prime foreign wools, *viz.* Leonesas, even at 6s. 9d. can hardly interfere with English fine wools at from 2s. to 3s.; yet, as a great proportion are the lower wools from Spain and Portugal, which, in consequence of the great failures, have often sold of late for less than the freights and insurance, they not only interfere with the first crosses of the Merino with British ewes, but also, with the prime clothing wools of English breeds, such as the Hereford and South Down; and the knowledge of the very extraordinary quantity imported, and of the stock of wool in the hands of the growers, has so much prejudiced the sale, that the growers seem entirely at the mercy of the buyers, and the latter are not averse to take advantage of circumstances which tend to keep down the value of wool.

The patriotic endeavours of his Majesty, and of several spirited individuals, to establish a permanent and adequate source of supply of fine wools in the United Kingdom, by the introduction of Spanish sheep, have succeeded more fully, and the object now seems likely to be more rapidly attained, than even the most sanguine had expected. There is every reason to believe that the Merino wool of British growth, such as his Majesty, Mr. Tollet, and other gentlemen have raised, if it were washed and sorted in the Spanish mode, might go to market in successful competition with the average of the Leonesas or best Spanish wools. The progress already made in the culture of wool of the Spanish breed, in England, is very encouraging. The fineness, and consequent value, of the fleece, compensates the deficiency of value in the carcase; but, if adequate prices be obtained for the wool, the growers will persevere in their exertions to improve the form and weight of the sheep, and it is probable that they would ultimately succeed, without deteriorating the excellence of the fleeces. These laudable exertions, however, to relieve the country from a great annual expenditure, for supplies of the materials of its staple manufacture, will prove unavailing, if the wool of every part of the world is to continue to be admitted duty free. The wool grower will of course soon cease to endeavour to im-

prove the quality of his fleeces, when he finds his labours unrewarded by an adequate price, and his attention will be turned from an improvement of the quality to an increase of the quantity; and thus we shall relapse into our former indifference of the character of our wool. The mischievous tendency of an unrestrained importation of foreign wools is now so glaringly obvious, that it must be regarded as an instance of national folly, if we do not immediately interpose some control upon the entry of inferior wools.

As it has been demonstrated that we can raise, in these islands, wools, as fine and as well adapted to our purposes, as those which we import, it is a highly unprincipled policy to continue to encourage an importation which costs us some millions sterling yearly: and at a time when we are necessarily so greedy of revenue, a duty of one shilling per pound on foreign wools, (which would have produced, last year, the sum of £546,550.), may be proposed as a very desirable measure, and would be supported by the best practical principles. While it would check the importation of wools of inferior quality, it would not, in any wise, prejudice the manufacture, or prevent the introduction of prime Spanish fleeces, such, as we used to import. It might, perhaps, furnish a pre-

tence to the manufacturer to increase the price of the finest cloths; but he could have no ground for complaint, as the sale of those prime fabrics, is almost wholly confined to the home market, where he is free from the competition of foreign manufactures, and would be amply indemnified, for any temporary advance of capital in payment of the duty, by the enhanced price which he could command for his commodity. But from the competition among speculators in foreign wool, and from the fluctuations in the market prices of that article being, as they must continue to be, during the present unsettled state of things, considerably greater than the amount of the proposed duty, it is probable that the manufacturer would be able to purchase the raw material as cheaply, as if it were not liable to the payment of the duty; and as only a small proportion of the fabrics manufactured from Spanish wool, goes to foreign markets, there can be no objection to the duty on the ground of injuring our export trade in woollens. It is a sufficient sacrifice of the landed to the manufacturing interest, to suffer the prohibition of the exportation of any kind of agricultural produce; but, the free admission of sheeps' wool of every quality, without subjecting it to the payment of any duties to counter-vail the comparative cheapness of the countries from whence it is brought, to the great discouragement of

the growth of wool in these kingdoms, is a sacrifice of essential interests in favour of foreigners, which cannot be supported by any principles of justice or sound policy. There can be no more doubt of the good policy of imposing a duty on foreign wool, though a raw material, than there is of the necessity of a duty on corn (the raw material of bread), when the price is reduced so low as to discourage its culture. It is not long since that we imported the greater part of the iron used in our manufactures; and there seemed to be a perfect despondency in respect to our ability to procure a supply from our own mines. However, the perseverance and skill of our iron masters, aided by a duty of £3. 7s. progressively increased to £5. 9s. 4d. and £6. 13s. 4d. per ton, have brought the manufacture of iron in Great Britain to such a high state of perfection, that in the course of 25 years, the quantity of foreign iron, imported for our use, has been reduced from 50,000 to about 16,000 tons, thereby saving to the country upwards of £800,000. yearly, notwithstanding a very considerable increase in the consumption of iron has taken place within the same period.

It has been speciously said that, by excluding the common wool of the continent, we should promote the manufacture of it abroad: but this argument is

not entitled to any consideration; for, in fact, the proposed duty would merely affect the sale of those inferior wools which have found their way into our markets, only within the last four or five years, and not, by any means, the description of fine wools which alone were formerly imported: and if the foreign grower, when excluded from our markets, should find the manufactories suspended which used to consume his coarse wools, as is the case, he will of course convert his pastures to other objects of culture. The principal object of the proposed duty is to check the unusual introduction of inferior wools, and thereby to prevent the discouragement of the growth of our own country; and to enable our fine wools to sustain a competition with the fine wools of other countries until the growth shall be equal to the supply of our manufactures. It will not surely be disputed that we ought not to expend our money in bringing a raw material from a foreign country, when we can raise it, with advantage, at home. But, wherever taxation is carried to a great and increasing height, and ultimately equalizes itself by attaching to the consumers, as, in this country, the prices of commodities must, for the most part, progressively increase; and hence, raw materials of manufacture, the produce of the soil, in countries not subject to the same degree of taxation, will be proportionably cheaper than in Great Britain,

Unless, therefore, we prefer to abandon our agriculture altogether, and to trust to precarious supplies from abroad, we must impose from time to time such duties upon products similar to our own, imported from foreign countries, as shall place the native cultivator upon an equal footing with the foreigner; for, the consumer will purchase at the cheapest price, and no man will long employ a capital in the production of an article which cannot afterwards be disposed of at a reasonable rate of profit. The validity of these principles cannot be refuted; and with respect to the particular subject of our consideration, it must be generally acknowledged that, under all the circumstances of the case, this is not only a proper moment, but the best, probably, which will occur, for carrying into execution a measure, the necessity for which is so clearly demonstrated by facts, and which comes recommended to us by the soundest principles of national policy.

But, to return to the causes of the dullness of the wool market; it may be imputed, not only to the overstock of foreign wool, but to the general distrust so diligently promoted; to mischievous speculations, and the difficulty in procuring discounts: these have produced many bankruptcies. The scarcity of gold is most erroneously attributed to particular operations

of the enemy, to the war, and sometimes to the conduct, highly infatuated, of the American States; but it may in great measure be imputed to our own bad policy, the neglect of encouraging tillage, the suffering it to labour under great depressions, permitting the grain of countries comparatively untaxed and untythed, to enter our ports, when the price of grain is too low to pay the farmer his expenses; the allowing millions of acres to lie waste, and, instead of assisting the improvements by premiums and bounties, permitting the money which might be most advantageously employed in the cultivation, to be swallowed up by lawyers, agents, and the clerks of both houses of Parliament, in soliciting and procuring separate acts of inclosure. Much waste land remains unclosed, and will remain so, solely on account of the great expense which must be incurred in obtaining inclosure acts. Very many parcels of common or waste land, though good in quality, being less in quantity than 7 or 800 acres, will not pay the present extravagant expense of a separate inclosure act: therefore, those parcels must ever remain comparatively in a state of waste, to the great disgrace of the national policy. These separate causes prevent the growth of a sufficiency of grain; and they preclude us from maintaining our former export trade in that article, which sixty years ago was very great. It was the deficiency

of grain in 1796, through the want of due encouragement of agriculture and of the cultivation of waste lands, far more than foreign subsidies, that drew from this country its gold, and brought on the Bank restriction in 1797; and from that time we have annually imported grain, on an average, to the amount of £7,000,000.; which added to the large sums we have paid for foreign wool, accounts for upwards of ten millions sterling unnecessarily sent yearly out of this country. In the years 1800 and 1801, the value of grain imported amounted to the immense sum of nineteen millions sterling. Besides, we have, perhaps, too largely run into the measure of importing various articles of foreign produced merchandize in much greater quantities than our home consumption required, we can find a vent for, by re-exportation. The whole of them, indeed, may not be imported on British account; but the advantages of the warehousing system, by which the payment of duties is suspended until the goods are taken out for home consumption, and none levied when re-exported, have rendered our principal ports the entrepot of the commerce of great part of the world; and the profits of commission, &c. tempt individuals to make considerable advances of money to the owners, even long before they are enabled to dispose of the goods; whereby the demand for bullion and specie to send abroad has been

encreased, and bills of exchange on this country multiplied. These and the necessary supplies of our army and fleet, sufficiently account for the unfavourable state of exchange. The restoration of confidence is principally necessary to maintain a reasonable degree of commerce. But we may despond of that blessing, while we are liable to such mischievous suggestions—as that the rental of England, and its commerce and manufactures, are dependant on, and must vary with, the price of bullion on the continent, and other foreign circumstances, a doctrine which can only tend to distress his Majesty's government, and through it occasion great confusion and mischief to the country. Too many of us are apt to be misled by insinuations, though superficial, and scarcely plausible. It is a false notion that this country till lately depended on the precious metals for its circulating medium. Our trade would have been much more limited, if we had not brought in aid a great paper currency; and if our coin had not found its way to the continent, I do not know how we should have been able to pay for the immense quantities of grain, wool, and other articles we have imported, and also the freight, or how we could have supplied our armies abroad. The rate of exchange is not affected by the issue of Bank of England paper; and I have little hesitation in saying that, the depreciation of that paper will not be felt as long

as the immense revenue of this country is received in Bank of England paper at the Exchequer. The deeming it a legal tender seemed to be the natural consequence of the restriction of cash payments.

I fear some of these details will appear superfluous, but they are necessary to justify and explain some general conclusions that I draw from them, and which I shall now briefly state.

That the scarcity of gold is not to be attributed, merely to the war, to the particular conduct of the enemy, nor to the hostile and unfriendly conduct of the American States; but, in a great degree, to bad policy in our interior management.

The large quantities of gold coin are not necessary to commerce: as has been amply proved in the instances of Holland and Scotland, which countries had but a very small quantity of coin in their most flourishing state.

That the demand for woollens for the home market is not diminished, but probably much increased, and that the export of them is also much increased.

That comparatively with the whole amount of the manufacture, the demand for foreign countries with which we are now at war, was not considerable.

That speculations in foreign wools, and the extravagant variations of price, have deranged the trade and manufacture of that article: but those wools being now reduced to their former price, and the manufacture of them being principally for the home market, there is little doubt of its being restored to its former state.

That there is no great quantity of prime Spanish wool in the market; but that there are very large stocks of inferior foreign wools, and that a large proportion of last year's clip of English fine wool is still on hand.

That it is not the decay of the manufacture or the want of demand for it, but difficulties respecting money, and the great stock of wool in hand, that occasion the debasement in price.

That the staplers of English fine wools have greatly suffered by speculations, by distrust arising from erroneous notions, and by the difficulties of obtaining discounts.

That the sale of fine English wools is greatly prejudiced by an immense importation of foreign wools, particularly of inferior sorts, and by the distressed state of the staplers:

The want of opportunity for inquiry and information often renders us liable to admit fallacious opinions and suggestions. If the positions I have stated for your consideration, should assist you in the investigation of subjects so very interesting to the country, it will afford me great satisfaction. My wish is, that we may not be led away by incorrect notions of the causes of the difficulties that have occurred. If we see distinctly how they arise, it will prove less difficult to obviate them.

I now come to the most disagreeable part of my report; the statement of the low prices lately given for fine English wools.

Hereford fair, the first of this month, was very ill attended, and the several sorts of wool were sold at prices very considerably reduced; the finest wools sold from 2s. 3d. to 2s. 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. which is nearly one third less than, the price of last year, but very little was sold. There was no demand for the inferior wools; sufficient busi-

ness was not done to note the price, but every thing sold very ill at that fair.

At Ross fair, on the 20th instant, as in most other places, little has been done: the best Ryeland sold from 2s. 4½d. to 2s. 6¼d.; 3s. was refused for Anglo-Merino wool, which sold last year at 5s.; and at Coleford fair, remarkable for fine wool, the prices were greatly reduced from those of the preceding year, and some was sold as low as 2s. 1d. per lb. It is the opinion, however, that wool will rise, as in Gloucester, and other parts, there is very little fine wool on hand, and at present, a great demand for fine cloths.

Shropshire wools are selling from 1s. 6d. to 2s. in the fleece; these are not much more than half the prices they sold for during the speculation.

In the neighbourhood of Bristol, in the beginning of this month, South Down sold from 2s. to 2s. 3d. Dorset, Devon, &c. 1s. to 1s. 6d. long wool 9d. and little was disposed of. These very low and discouraging prices, of course, prevented the owners of the wool from selling; but Spanish wools are the great article for sale in that district, and its price has al-

ready been stated; some English-Merino wool washed, sold in Bristol at the very low price of 4s.

At Dorchester fair in Oxfordshire, South Down wool, certainly of an indifferent quality, sold for 1s. 6d. per lb. the same as sold last year for 2s. 5d. The wools of Wilts. and Berks. from 1s. to 1s. 1d.; one lot of coarse Leicester and Gloucester cross at 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.; and some Spanish lambs' wool for 4s. Almost the whole of the wool offered for sale, notwithstanding the depreciation in price, was sold. The farmers being aware of the utility of the fair, are determined to support it.

In Suffolk only 1s. 6d. per lb. is talked of for Norfolk and South Down wools; but it is only little farmers who have sold any. The great farmers consider the price so unsettled, and the demand so trifling, that they do not sell at all.

In parts of Staffordshire where wool is grown, about the quality of untrinded Herefordshire, and fully as good as the South Down, some has been sold at 2s. to 2s. 1d. about a third less than last year.

The great sale for wool in Ireland was not to take place till the 23d, of which we could not yet have any account; but it was expected there would be a ready

demand, and good prices, at least for the best lots. The prices of the common clothing wools, of an inferior quality, have been from 1s. 7d. to 1s. 9d. per lb.; and from 2s. 6d. to 2s. 8d. for wools of the first cross between Wicklow and South Down: so much has the native breed improved by crossing with South Down rams.

I have confined myself principally to the fine clothing wools, but as to the low priced English wools, I understand they have been bought up in many parts of the country as freely as usual.

With a view to obtain the best information in my power, I have engaged in a very extensive correspondence, and I have collected a great number of the best documents that could be acquired; I have not made use of any information but that on which I was satisfied I might depend, and the authorities are highly respectable; the details have been examined with great care; and I have made a selection of what appeared consistent, and what I conceived might be useful both to the buyer and the seller. The information shews that so little business has been done, that no fixed price can be stated. In many parts, the dealers had not come into the country, as usual; but the price is rising, and considerably; and it is a general opi-

nion, that it must and will speedily rise higher, and that credit is in a considerable degree re-established. —There is an expectation that some ports, which are now shut will be open to us, and that when the check which has taken place in consequence of the late derangement is at an end, English wool will readily sell at its former prices. It is known that until very lately, no wool was sold except by the necessitous; that the wool staplers have supplied the manufacturers from their old stores, which must now be much exhausted; that the manufacturer draws his supplies monthly, and sometimes weekly, and seldom has any large stock in hand; and that the staplers have, at present, but little money at command.* Under these circumstances, the growers of fine wools, in all the principal districts, have no expectation of a sale at present, the price being so inadequate to its intrinsic value; and they seem to have concluded on keeping it, until a more regular demand shall arise. The fair at Dorchester in Oxfordshire, where inferior wools were sold, is the only exception that has come to my knowledge.

It is the opinion of some, that there is no more wool now in the hands of the growers than there used to

* The wool growers usually contract with the staplers for prompt payment; the proceeds of their wool being generally applied to the payment of their rents at Michaelmas, especially those who are not very opulent.

be in those of the staplers; but I conceive it probable, that the late good prices for fine wools, may have increased the growth of them considerably. If the legislature, however, should not give the country that protection to which it is entitled, by adequate duties on the import of foreign wools, it is certain that such immense importations must utterly put an end to the growth of fine wools in the United Kingdom.

As to the price that should be accepted for our wool, it is very difficult to give an opinion. I have stated all the facts that appeared to me worth the attention of the meeting, and notwithstanding the home consumption and the exports are both increased, perhaps in consideration of the embarrassed state of the money market, and the redundancy of foreign wools, it may be adviseable to take from 2s. to 2s. 4d. per lb. for the best South Down; and this reduction I am sure is full as much as the times require.

The meeting appeared very much satisfied with the report. Lord Chichester proposed the health of Lord Sheffield, and the thanks of the company, for the useful information he had given, and the comprehensive view he had taken of the subject; observing, that without the advantage of the information, Lord S. had yearly communicated to the meet-

ing, they would have been under great difficulty to form a conjecture of the real value of their wool, and of the state of the trade. The wool-buyers acknowledged the fairness and correctness of the statement; they said they had suffered so much, that the trade could not afford even the reduced prices proposed by his Lordship; and they alluded to the non-importation law of the American States. Lord Sheffield insisted that the home consumption and the export trade being both increased, there was no ground for a reduction of the price given of late years for the South Down wool, except that of the market being overstocked with foreign wools: that the reduction he proposed was from 10*d.* to 1*s.* per lb. nearly a third; and that previously to the late speculation, the best had sold at 3*s.* 3½*d.* per lb.; that the manufacture had been raised upwards of a third per yard, but that the average between the low and the high prices did not justify a rise of more than 1*s.* 8*d.* per yard. He was satisfied, if the American States should, through a partiality to France, or the wrong-headedness of a party there unfavourable to Great Britain, again enact a non-intercourse law, it would be evaded, or not generally observed. The people of that country will not go naked, from affection to the French, or enmity to this country; and whatever they can pay for will find its way to

to them, and what they do not take from us this, they will another year; and thus, it has always been found they have taken on an average nearly the same quantity. It does not appear that they can get clothing from any other country at present, nor will it be possible for them, for a long time, to manufacture sufficiently for themselves; and this is most certain, that they cannot dispose of their produce or merchandize but through this country, and that the United Kingdom can get every article of the produce of the American States, fully as good and as cheap from other countries. Lord Sheffield added, that at all events, it would be adviseable to keep the wool, if they could not get 2s. 3d. for the best lots.

A very considerable quantity had been sold before the fair at 2s. and for some lots 2s. 3d. has been given.

The same backwardness to purchase, which took place at Lewes, prevailed at the other wool fairs.

The Thetford fair was numerously attended; little business was done in the room, but there was an evident desire in the buyers to purchase privately, the best wool at from 20d. to 25d. Some were sold at

those prices, but a rise was expected, and the farmers shewed little disposition to sell at these low rates.

At Ashford fair, in Kent, (not long established) there was nothing done in South Down or fine English wools. The demand increasing and value rising considerably.

At Colchester only 21*d.* per lb. was offered for the best samples of Norfolk and South Down wools, and pretty good wools sold at 19*d.* The wool growers seem disposed to take nearly one-third less of the prices of late years, but the wool buyer, very unreasonably requires a greater reduction.

The demand for woollen manufactures has lately been considerable; they find their way to Russia, and large assortments are in hand for the spring shipments to America. It would also appear that, the superfine clothing trade is particularly brisk; in Gloucestershire, the manufacturers are very actively employed, and several establishments are mentioned as now breaking 20 packs of wool a week, each. It may, however, be remarked, that the prejudices of the manufacturer are such, that he is now daily buying inferior Spanish wools, by no means equal to

fine English wools, at very superior prices to what he will give for the English.

Principal persons concerned in the import of foreign wools, say, that notwithstanding the importation in the half year ending 5th July last, has been 3,140,676lbs. scarcely a bag has been received which would, three years ago, have been esteemed of prime quality; and but comparatively a small quantity of superior seconds. Nevertheless, foreign wools, as above observed, when compared with British fine wools, obtain high prices; though they do not yield more than a fair average profit to the importers.

A gentleman who has just returned from Spain, whither he went last Autumn, for the purpose of inspecting the flocks, and contracting for fine fleeces, says, that if the country were immediately relieved from the destructive warfare in which it is at present plunged, many years must elapse before the flocks would recover their former state of perfection. There is now scarcely a pure flock in the country, and from the impossibility of obtaining the usual succession of pasture, and other causes, the fleeces are generally very much deteriorated in quality. He accounts for the importation of wools this year, by the fact that it has been composed chiefly of the in-

ferior wools which Spain was accustomed to retain for the consumption of her own manufacture, very few of which have been able to continue at work. It is acknowledged, that formerly the greater part of these wools would not have found a market here.

The current prices of Spanish wools have risen considerably within the last three weeks, but on comparing these prices with what have been obtained in the course of the last three or four years, reference should always be had to the circumstances above stated, as at least 25 per cent. should be added to them. Thus for instance, a parcel having the prime Leonesa marks was sold last week at 8s. 3d. but the fleeces were very foul, and when brought into the state in which wools of the same marks used to come, they will have cost the purchaser about 11s. 6d. or 12s. and even then they will not be equal in quality, on account of the commixture of fleeces. Very large quantities of Sorias have, in like manner, been sold as low as at 2s. 3d. and 3s. per lb.

The sheep's wool imported into Great Britain, on an average of four years, ending 5th January, 1811, was 5,767,865lbs.; and the quantity imported in the half year ending 5th July, 1811, distinguishing the countries whence imported, was as follows:—

	lbs.
Germany and North of Europe	- 41,594
Portugal	- 872,681
Spain and Gibraltar	- 2,147,696
Malta and Levant	- 49,654
Ireland and Isle of Man	- 3,690
Cape of Good Hope	- 4,318
States of America	- 7,103
Brazils	- 12,741
Prize	- 1,193

Total lbs. 3,140,670

of which 1,727,000lbs. were imported in the first quarter of the year, ending 5th April last. It is difficult to ascertain what proportion of these wools came from France; but it is known that a considerable quantity was brought here, in neutral vessels, indirectly from that country.

The quantity of wool disposed of by auction, at the annual sale in Ireland, on the 24th and 25th of July last, exceeded the sale of the preceding year by 1305 fleeces, and has increased since the first institution in 1806 from 100 to 5249 fleeces. The late speculations and derangements in trade do not seem to have affected the wool trade in Ireland, nor has it suffered by the combinations of the jobbers.

	per lb.
Lord Clermont's 171 fleeces of South	
Down sold at - - - - -	6s. 8d.
amounting to 15s. per fleece.	
Mr. Chritchly's sold at - - - - -	6 7
Mr. Owen Wynne's 329 fleeces, average	
16s. 3d. per fleece, at - - - - -	5 9
Sir John Sebright's at - - - - -	3 8
His fleece, weight 5lbs. amounted to -	18 4

The average price of the whole of the South Down wool there sold was 3s. 4d. per lb.

Dr. Butler's 91 fleeces of Merino sold at 12s. 3d. per lb. Several other lots of Merino sold at 7s. 8s. 9s. and 10s. per lb. Mr. George Evan sold seven Merino fleeces for £15, viz. at 7s. 6d. per lb.

Lord Meath's South Down on Wicklow sold at 4s.

The farming Society of Ireland report, that the introduction of the Merino breed into that country has exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the manufacturers, and promised amply to repay the expense of the import of Spanish sheep; the avidity of the buyers to purchase the wool, must account for prices evidently beyond the intrinsic value of unscour-

ed wool. The parcel that sold highest was shorn from a portion of the flock imported into Cork last summer, and was considered equal to any that Spain could produce. The manufacturers were perfectly satisfied with the manner in which it was made up, though merely river washed upon the sheep's back. In every instance where the soap washing had been used, the appearance of the wool was injured, and it was the general opinion that washing carefully upon the sheep's back in pure rain water, was the safest and best method to adopt.

The extraordinary advantages resulting from the cross of Merino on South Down, appeared not only in the parcels of wool of that description, but by the high prices at which they sold; exceeding the rate of pure Merino in many instances.

The Farming Society pay a just tribute to the spirited exertions of Dr. Parry, who presented the Society with a ram from which, on the South Down ewes of Mr. Grierson, the wool of some sheep of one year old attained the extraordinary price of 9s. 9d. per lb. unscoured.

The Report further says, that the South Down wool and the crosses of the South Down on Wicklow

Mountain sheep, did not bring the extravagant prices of the last year, but sold in general very well, and would have sold much better, but for the inferiority of many parcels, from having been badly made up, and from the want of judicious selection by some of the breeders.

At the Rathdrum shew of cattle in Ireland, the 5th of this month, Mr. Owen Byrne obtained the first premium for ewe lambs of the cross of South Down on Native Wicklow Mountain, and his wool was much approved and bore a high price, being the first cross of South Down, the progeny of which are found to possess all the hardiness of the native breed; but the Merino wools were the favourites, and the general opinion was, that a cross from the Merino and South Down if generally established, would be productive of a superior growth of fine wool.

Ignorance and prejudice, however, here in England keep down the price of British grown Spanish wool; yet the spirited introducers of the Spanish breed should not be discouraged. The produce of Lord Castlereagh's Merino flock this year, averaged 5 lb. 5 oz. per fleece of wool washed on the sheep's back. Some of the ewe tegs clipt 7 lb. 8 oz., it is deemed worth 8s. per lb. at which price the fleeces,

on an average of the flock, are worth 43s. each. A very considerably smaller profit would compensate for a deficiency of weight in the carcase. The intelligence of our breeders will soon, by crossing, bring the sheep to such form, as we deem more perfect; and it seems proved that the wool of the Spanish, crossed on Ryeland and South Down, is fully equal to the whole breed of Spain. If the constitution of the sheep that first arrived from that country, does not completely resist our climate, their descendants bred in England will acquire sufficient hardiness, and even by degrees be brought to bear the fold, if it should be required, as well as our own sheep; and the closeness of the wool and the crust of a waxy matter which peculiarly belongs to the breed, ought to preserve them better from the inclemency of the weather, than the slighter fleeces of the English fine woolled sheep. Thee foot-rot, to which the Spanish sheep seem liable, might be avoided by attention and care.

Report, July 27th, 1812.

SINCE I last had the honour of attending this Meeting, the value of English fine wools has been too low to encourage the growers to prefer quality to quantity. I have, however, the satisfaction of observing that for some time it has been gradually on the rise.

The depression has been most erroneously imputed to other causes, but the real cause was the immense importation of wool from the Continent, in a much worse state, and inferior in quality, to that which used to be imported. In consequence of the quantity being more than was wanted for consumption, or for which there was a demand, it sold at low prices; and through the prejudices of the manufacturers, greatly interfered with English fine wools.

The average importation of foreign wool, in the beginning of the last century, was only 869,727 lbs. The average of eight years, ending 1789, was 2,660,828 lbs. The average of eight years, ending 1799, was 4,020,000 lbs. The average of eight years, ending 1810 inclusive, was 7,729,929 lbs.

Wool imported in the year—

1806	-	-	-	-	7,333,993 lbs.
1807	-	-	-	-	11,768,926
1808	-	-	-	-	2,353,725
1809	-	-	-	-	6,845,933
1810	-	-	-	-	10,936,224
1811	-	-	-	-	4,739,972

The two quarters ending the 5th of July, 1812,
2,587,533 lbs.

The importation of the first quarter of this year, ending the 5th of April, into Great Britain, was 816,608 lbs. of which 593,187 lbs. came from Portugal, while only 190,125 lbs. were received from Spain. But in the quarter ending the 5th of July, 1812, the importation of foreign wool into London was 1,383,215 lbs.; rather more than the greatest importation in former years, during that quarter. The importation into Bristol for the same period was 230,910 lbs. and that into Liverpool amounted to 156,800 lbs. Total of the two quarters, ending the 5th of July, 1812, 2,587,533 lbs. which is about a sixth less than the importation during the same period the preceding year. A greater decrease in the importation might have been expected in consequence of the ruinous state of Spain and of her flocks, and also in consequence of the greater part of the country being then in possession of the French. I am informed also that very little wool remains in those shipping ports of Spain and Portugal which are now open to us. The quantity of Spanish wool in this country must be considerably decreased, as in April last the demand for broad cloths, in every part of Gloucestershire, Somersetshire, and Wiltshire, was greater than has been known; and it is supposed the present consumption exceeds the importation. Every hand is now employed, and many of them both day and

night. Many of the great manufacturers work up from thirty to forty bags, and upwards, of Spanish wool, per week, and could employ double their present number of hands if they could be procured.

Since the Bristol fair, last September, Spanish wools advanced from 1s. 6d. to 3s. per lb. There has been some decline in the price, but at Bristol, July 16, 1812, the prices were—

Prime Leonesas from		9s. 0d. to 9s. 6d.
Prime Segovias	- -	7s. 6d. to 8s. 6d.
Prime Sorias	- -	6s. 6d. to 7s. 6d.

The increase of price and of consumption, and the decrease of importation, must necessarily raise the value of fine English wool: but the above are the prices of the prime sorts. It is the unlimited importation of inferior wools that will discourage the growth, and will ultimately prove ruinous to English fine wools, if not protected by an import duty. The growth of wool in England actually exceeds the demand, and is more than is likely to be wanted in any state of our trade, at least so as to give a satisfactory return or a reasonable price to the grower. Wool is the only article which is prohibited from seeking another market in the case of a redundancy, and nothing can be more

unjust, nor calls more loudly for redress, than the unprincipled measure of suffering an article to come from every part of the world, free of all duty, in competition with the wool of this country, so taxed and tythed. Our Wool labours even under what is worse than a maximum, and is entirely at the mercy of those whose interest it is to debase the price. Every principle of policy and of justice, requires that an import duty should be laid on foreign wool, by which our revenue would be considerably benefited, and the growth of fine wool, which has with so much spirit been lately promoted in the United Kingdom, would be permanently established. It may be necessary that every county should address the Legislature, and if relief cannot be obtained, we must diminish our flocks or relinquish the growth of fine wool.

In respect to the demand for our woollen manufactures, on which the value of wool must necessarily depend, there is no ground for apprehension. The home market is greatly increased, and on that we may rely; and I flatter myself I shall be able to shew, that it is comparatively not a very considerable proportion of our manufactures that goes to foreign countries. But so much has been said in respect to the decline of trade, and of the consequent reduced demand for

wool and woollens, that it is necessary to enter into some details to expose the fallacy of those suggestions.

First, as to our general trade. The real value of exports from Great Britain to all parts of the world, average of three years, ending 1807, inclusive, was - - - - - £51,540,224

Average of four years, ending 1811, inclusive, - - - - - £55,657,372

So that our general exports have increased upwards of £4,000,000. on an average, above the years preceding the operation of the British Orders in Council and American Non-importation and Embargo Laws, to which the supposed declining trade has been so clamorously and so falsely imputed. The trade to certain countries has declined by the change of its direction. The Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade,* the American Non-importation Act, the Berlin Decree, and the Orders in Council, which blockaded the coast from the Elbe to Brest, both inclusive, took place in 1806; and in the following year, the best measure of Lord Grenville's administration, the retaliatory Order in Council, dated the

* By which the exports to Africa declined from £1,156,000. in 1805; to £409,075. in 1811.

7th of January (from whence sprang the other Orders,) the Milan Decree, the American Embargo, and the war with Russia; all these took place in the year 1807, and necessarily produced great variation in our trade. The exports in 1805 and 1806, which were very great, on an average of the two years £52,069,006; on an average of the two following years, viz. 1807 and 1808, declined £1,842,803. But on an average of the two following years, 1809 and 1810, they amounted to £64,360,060, amply making up for the decline of the two preceding years, and also of the subsequent year 1811, when the exports fell to £43,939,620, a very natural decrease arising from the excess of preceding exports. Thus, notwithstanding all the impediments and adverse efforts of the enemy, the commerce of the British Empire, on averages compared with any former period, has not suffered, but has considerably increased.

The powers of production in the British Empire are at present so great and so extensive, that demand can scarcely keep pace with them. Our commerce in 1809 and 1810, was greater than ever it had been; and it is not surprising that, after extraordinary production and exportation, foreign markets should be glutted, and that the subsequent year (1811) should

fall short, in some proportion, to the extraordinary excess of the two preceding years.

So far relates to the general trade of the country ; but the great complaint has been the failure of the exportation of British manufactures to the American States. Perhaps the public has never been more completely imposed on, nor a greater proportion of it more completely duped, than it has been by the ill-founded clamour so diligently and mischievously fomented against the Orders in Council.

The real value of the exports from Great Britain to the American States, previously to the American Non-importation and Embargo Laws, and to the British Orders in Council—average of three years, ending 1807 inclusive - - £12,136,811

And to all other parts of America,
including the British and Foreign

West Indies - - - 10,599,514

Total for the whole of America - £22,736,325

The real value of the exports from Great Britain to the American States, average of four years ending 1811 inclusive, during which period the British Orders in Council, and American Non-importation

and Embargo Laws, were in operation	£6,464,059
And to all other parts of America, in-	
cluding the British and Foreign West	
Indies	17,133,553

Making a total for the whole of America £23,597,612

In the latter period, therefore, the deficiency in the direct exports to the American States was more than compensated by an increased exportation to other parts of America, by which it would appear that, during the first mentioned period, the goods exported from hence in American vessels were by no means entirely carried to the American States, for the consumption of those States, but that a large proportion of them must have been conveyed by the Americans to the West Indies and South America; which we have ourselves since supplied directly in British ships; and that an equivalent proportion of the exports, to the British North American Colonies and the West Indies, must in the latter period have indirectly found their way into the American States to make up the deficiency in the direct importations there. Ireland, which has so advantageous a trade with this country, imports annually from hence manufactures and produce to the amount of 7,000,000

and upwards, which is probably full as much as was ever actually consumed within the American States.

Our trade to the continent of Europe has heretofore been much greater than it ever has been to the American States, and as the French Decrees exclude all British manufactures and produce from every part of the world under the influence of France, the manufactures formerly sent to those were in great part thrown upon the home and American markets, by which both would have been overstocked even if the American non-intercourse had never taken place.

The principal complaints came from the manufacturers of Birmingham, many of whom having been excluded by those decrees from the continental market, turned to the American trade, and having limited themselves to that trade only, and an immense quantity of Birmingham manufactures having been sent there in 1810, those houses, whose trade was limited, of course suffered on the American ports being shut. Several respectable persons who were examined before the House of Lords said that, in consequence of the introduction of machinery and other improvements, the manufacturers of Birmingham have within a short time more than doubled, and that the *great, unusual, and unnatural amount of*

business in 1809 and 1810, and the great accumulation of impediments in the disposal of the commodities, acting all at once in October 1810, trade was greatly depressed. Similar continental manufactures have interfered, and are preferred and substituted in many instances, particularly in the late French, and also in the Spanish possessions in the West Indies and South America. And as long as the American States have access, contrary to all sound principle to our East and West India possessions, they will supply them with contraband goods, and when the Continent is open to the American States, they must take in payment, continental productions and manufactures far exceeding their own consumption, and will be under the necessity of forcing a sale for them in foreign markets. Under these circumstances, therefore, Great Britain will not only find a very disadvantageous competition in such markets, but in those also of which she ought to have the exclusive supply.

Misrepresentation and misapprehension have seldom had greater effect than in respect to the Orders in Council. Real distresses, arising from different causes, were exaggerated and represented to be general, when only certain classes of manufacturers were in want of work. Yet every distress, every riot and outrageous proceeding, arising from whatever cause, were

imputed to those Orders; those just and necessary retaliatory measures, without which, not only France and all the countries under her influence, but also the whole of our foreign possessions in every part of the world, would have been supplied with the manufactures and produce of hostile countries, by American shipping, creating a most dangerous competition with British manufactures. And let it not be forgotten, that our inestimable Carrying Trade, which was almost lost by the admission of neutral shipping, has been in a great degree restored by the operation of the Orders in Council!!!

Our Navigation Laws were in part suspended, with the view of exporting the manufactures of the United Kingdom by means of licenses, and the licenses obviated, in a considerable degree, the obstructions created by the French Decrees to the admittance of our manufactures.

Without those licenses, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, and all the countries under the influence of France, being hostile, our exports to those parts would have been extremely limited or subject to great difficulty and loss. If the Orders in Council had not taken place, our enemies would have been supplied with raw materials and with articles of every description; and while

their manufactures and produce would have been sent to all parts by neutral shipping, we should have been shut out from the Continent. As produce can be raised much cheaper in the foreign than in the British West India colonies, the countries under the control of France would be supplied in American shipping, navigating at peace freights and peace insurances, at a much lower rate, and in exchange for their own manufactures; and of course no colonial produce would be received on the Continent from hence. The West India trade was extremely depressed in 1806 and 1807, in consequence of the foreign markets being supplied by neutrals; and the latest accounts from the Havannah state that the Americans take off their sugars at good prices, and have filled their markets with French manufactures.

Our retaliatory measures have reduced the Continent to the greatest distress, insomuch that the French Decrees would have been revoked, if a mischievous and groundless clamour had not encouraged their continuance. But the repeal of the Orders in Council, while the enemy will observe neither treaty nor restriction, would give effect to all the measures of *France*, in favour of her own commerce, and to the detriment of ours; and all colonial produce would be supplied by neutral shipping.

The Non-importation, the Non-intercourse, and Embargoes, have occasioned the greatest distress and bankruptcies in the American States. The produce of that country, which would meet a ready sale in this, cannot find a market, nor could they obtain payment for the flour sent to Spain and Portugal, except by bills on England from British Commissaries in those countries; and exchange is so much against the American States, that their export trade to Europe must soon cease. One great advantage arising from exchange being so unfavourable to the American States is, that the American debt to this country has been in great part liquidated. American exports to France in 1804 are stated at ten millions sterling, but, being checked by our Orders in Council, they were reduced in 1810 to £600,000.

The evidence of the most respectable persons, and petitions from the most considerable houses in the city, and of the oldest establishments, and signed by a great number of the principal merchants, ship-owners, and traders, support and maintain these opinions respecting the Orders in Council, and express a belief that the great body of merchants of the United Kingdom entertain the same. I am sorry to observe that, so atrocious has been the conduct of the perpetrators and abettors of the late disgraceful transactions in

the disturbed counties, that they have endeavoured, by a system of terror and of assassination, to prevent respectable men, at the head of great establishments, from coming forward and giving evidence; and, to my knowledge, they have succeeded in several instances; and five chiefs of manufacturing establishments, whom they considered as unfriendly to them, have been assassinated. But the promoters of the clamour against the Orders in Council argue as if the British Government were the aggressor in the dispute with America. Yet the American Non-importation Act was passed in April, 1806, with the view of obliging Great Britain to abandon the right of search. This happened fifteen months before the affair of the Chesapeake, and before any of the Orders in Council, of which they complain, were meditated. Nor have these Orders at any time been the only object of American complaint. The Orders in Council issued by the short Administration of 1806, and during Mr. Perceval's Administration, were consequent to the French Decrees, and for the purpose of compelling the enemy to revoke those Decrees, which had for object the exclusion of all British manufactures and produce from every part of the world under the influence of France; and which were enforced in the most savage manner—by forfeiture, branding, and ten years' hard labour.

I have entered into details which, perhaps, may appear foreign to the subject ; but it is essential to remove misapprehensions, and to prevent manufacturers from being misled by fallacious accounts of the state of commerce ; and it is peculiarly essential to point the attention of those concerned to plain and simple speculations, which will best tend to their interests, and are within our controul. I wish to shew that those interests are comparatively little affected by the circumstances that have been so clamorously pressed upon their attention, and that the value of their commodities is, by no means, so dependant on the export trade to foreign countries as is generally imagined : it is essential also that our commercial resources should be known, and how far and how little the manufacturers of this country are dependant on a direct trade with the American States.

I wish to point out the real state of the dispute with those States, and to prevent the public from being dismayed by false and mischievous suggestions, in case that perverse and Frenchified party (by no means the most respectable nor most numerous part of those States) should continue hostile, and that our concessions should be rejected. I wish it also to be considered, that the clamours for concession to the American States cannot benefit our trade gene-

rally, but must and do encourage those States to persevere in their extravagant claims, which, if conceded, the most essential political interests will be sacrificed for uncertain, or at best transitory, advantages. The highly mischievous concessions of the most precious interests by the treaty of 1794, though possibly only temporary, should not for a moment, nor under any circumstances, have been granted.

The sure and highly improving market of the British empire is alone sufficient to employ a vast number of manufacturers, and to consume infinitely the greater part of our manufactures. This, generally called the home in contradistinction to foreign markets, includes not only England, Scotland, and Ireland, but also our Colonies in North America; the whole of the West Indies now in our possession; the East Indies, the Cape of Good Hope, Gibraltar, Malta, and all places now occupied by us; which contains, as I conceive, nearly 30,000,000 of inhabitants,* exclusive of Indians. But were we to place

* Great Britain, Guernsey, Jersey, &c.	-	14,000,000
Ireland	-	4,500,000
The two Canadas, Prince Edwards, Cape Breton, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, &c.	-	2,000,000
The whole of the West Indies now in our possession, including French, Dutch, and Danish	-	3,500,000
Gibraltar, Sicily, Malta, and the East Indies, including Java, the Isle of France, the Cape of Good Hope, &c.	-	6,000,000
		30,000,000

any confidence in the declamations we have lately heard, it would seem that the supply of the few millions, not very opulent, scattered over the comparatively thinly inhabited country of the American States, was of more consequence than this home market, which we might completely command. Those who are so apprehensive of the loss of the American market, may recollect, that during the rebellion, and the most acrimonious part of it, the Provinces were supplied with British manufactures in preference to those of their great ally and protector France, which were most eagerly pressed upon them. Yet America never did nor ever will take from us any article with which she can possibly supply herself, nor any article which she can procure better or cheaper from other countries, but she will continue to take from us such merchandize and manufactures as are necessary for herself, and for her foreign commerce.

I hope it will not be supposed that my observations in favour of the home market, imply an opinion that our foreign trade will generally decrease; on the contrary, I am convinced it will greatly increase: and even if the demand for British manufactures, from the American States, should decline, I am perfectly satisfied that our commerce with South America, whose ports are not likely again to be shut against us, will

most amply compensate. Our merchants have been discouraged because their first and immense shipments for Buenos Ayres did not meet a ready market. But merchandize, emptied indiscriminately from all our warehouses, was ill assorted for the country; the vast regions usually supplied from Buenos Ayres, being in a state of the most destructive warfare, and hostile to the capital, the consumption of our manufactures was confined to the population of the city. Neither the merchants of Chili nor Lima could venture to come, with their mules laden with dollars, to purchase, nor were there any means of supplying the interior: we may be assured that an intercourse with Great Britain will give rise to new wants in that extensive country, and we find that the South American market is now becoming profitable to the regular merchant.

The complaints of the manufacturers of iron and Birmingham wares have been the loudest, and the distress of those who had not full employment, especially in a time of scarcity, is greatly to be lamented. There can be no doubt, however, that no inconsiderable portion of the discontent in some districts arose from the reduction of wages, extravagantly raised by eager speculation for the South American, as well as the Mediterranean and other markets, that enabled the manufacturers to idle two or three days in the week;

which reduction, unfortunately happening at the time of the extraordinary high price of bread, occasioned the distress to be severely felt. But the want of employment should be imputed to the French Decrees, and to the increase of the manufactures beyond demand, rather than to the Orders in Council; and it should be observed, that foreign markets have been glutted, and manufactures greatly distressed, long before Orders in Council were ever thought of, and in times of tranquillity.

It has been already hinted that the prohibition of British Goods on the continent had thrown a greater quantity of our manufactures than ever went to the American States, upon the Home and American markets; and that those traders, who had transferred and limited their dealings to the American States alone, found a large quantity of manufactures on their hands when the American ports were shut against them. But it is clear, that in consequence of the introduction of machinery and of other improvements, and by our eager desire to speculate wherever we have the least opening, we have overstocked or surpassed the demand, particularly in the manufactures of iron and Birmingham articles, which have increased so wonderfully as to have more than doubled within the last five years: and so great also is the increase in the

manufacture of cottons, that were we at peace with all the world, I am convinced we have overdone the market in those manufactures; and in order that we may be less liable to be imposed on or misled, we should prepare ourselves, in the case of peace, to expect that the foreign demand for some of our manufactures, in consequence of the competition which would then take place, instead of increasing might considerably decrease; nor should we conceal from ourselves that certain iron manufactures of the continent are preferred, as cheaper and stronger, in several of the markets we frequent; and that great efforts have been made in the American States in the manufacture of iron.

I should be extremely sorry if this observation could be imputed to any indifference on my part towards the iron manufacture: there certainly is not a more hearty well-wisher to that trade than I am: it has circumstances to recommend it beyond all others; it is all labour, from the taking the ore out of the earth to the finishing of the spring of a watch, in which state it is infinitely more valuable than any metal whatever. But there can be no doubt of its continuing to flourish; it does not depend merely on fashion, nor on foreign markets; the British Empire will always require an immense supply.

The want of confidence which has prevailed; the distrust arising from bankruptcies; the alarm occasioned by the Report of the Bullion Committee; and the hostile conduct of the American States; operating together—bankers and others could not venture to accommodate the master manufacturers and persons engaged in trade, as heretofore. This want of confidence, in many instances, prevented the master manufacturers from giving full employment to their workmen, rather than the want of orders; and many thought it prudent to dismiss a number of their hands, not because they had no orders, but on account of the difficulty of obtaining money to execute orders for which they would not be paid for many months.

The complaints, as to the decline of the Woollen trade in Yorkshire, may be answered by a comparison of the average exports of Woollens at different periods.

The average value of five years, ending the 5th of			
January, 1776,	-	-	£4,350,941.
Average of five years, ending the 5th of January,			
1789,	-	-	£3,544,116.
Average of five years, ending the 5th of January,			
1812,	-	-	£5,158,338.

The export in 1811 was £4,376,000., considerably below the two preceeding years of extraordinary exports, but exceeding the average exports of five years previously to the American war, and of the five years preceding the French revolution. And I learn, from the Custom-House, that the exports of Woollens this year will not be short of any former year.

The conditional revocation of the Orders in Council has occasioned a very great advance, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, on coarse goods, and even on those of rather higher prices; but middle priced and superfine cloths have not experienced much change. Cloths under 5s. per yard are in greater demand than those from 5s. to 10s. per yard.

We have no returns of the quantity of Woollens manufactured, except those that are milled in the West Riding of Yorkshire, which is a very small part of the whole of our manufacture of Woollens.

On an average of five years, ending	
the 5th of April, 1776, the	<i>yards.</i>
amount was	- - - 5,369,518

On an average of five years, ending	
the 5th of April, 1789,	- 8,642,716

On an average of five years, ending	
the 5th of April, 1812,	- 14,718,825

So that on an average there is a great increase of milled cloth; and taking even the year 1811, which was supposed to be a year when the manufacture had greatly declined, we find that it exceeded the quantity milled in 1802, a year of peace, by 561,293 yards.

These returns are made to Pontefract Easter Session, and the Gentleman who makes them has just now communicated that there is a great increase of cloth milled in the quarter ending the 25th of last month, which must have been manufactured previously to the suspension of the Orders in Council.

The introduction of Spanish Sheep into the United Kingdom is a subject of such great importance, that it claims some observation. Their reputation has suddenly fallen, but I am not aware that it has happened on sufficient ground or trial. The good opinion I had formed of that breed was, however, very much checked on hearing that a person in respectability, real patriotism, and liberal attention to the rural economy of the British Empire; and, I may add, in knowledge of the subject,—I mean Mr. Coke of Norfolk, who has declared himself unfavourable to the Spanish breed. I understand the objection is entirely to the carcass; for the superior

rity of the wool over the English fine wools cannot be doubted. But Mr. Tollet, Mr. Tharp, Mr. Webb Hall, Mr. Birkbeck, Mr. Lucas, and others, who have entered deeply into the experiments, are perfectly satisfied of the practicability of growing superfine wool in these kingdoms, and that the value of the breed will revive.

The Merino wool, grown in this country, is now very readily sold at an advanced price, and great encouragement is held out in future. The additional quantity of wool these sheep produce being much more than the South Down, and in many instances double the quantity of the latter, added to the well-authenticated statements of the tendency to fatten equal to any except the Leicester breed, are circumstances strongly in their favour.

Mr. Tharp observes, that the high crossed wethers, bred by him, and exhibited at Lord Somerville's and the Merino meeting, gained both prizes for wool and fatness. As to the shape of the sheep, I have little doubt that the intelligence of our breeders will, by crossing, bring it to that form we deem most perfect.

There are two sorts of sheep in Spain, and it is said the flesh of the fine woolled sheep is never eaten in

that country. They are kept merely for their wool, and on land in a miserably bad state, without any care about their feeding, consequently we cannot be surprised if their flesh is bad. It is the case in all warm countries, where they are neglected; so much so, that in the southern parts of Italy, where there is no attention bestowed upon them, the flesh is not deemed wholesome; while in Switzerland, where the pasture is favourable, the mutton is as good as any I have eaten; but I cannot suppose that the flesh of sheep of the Spanish breed, the grain of which is as fine as any we are acquainted with, properly fed from the birth, and on English pasture, will not prove excellent meat. It is not a fair trial to attempt to fatten those starved animals, landed here in the most miserable condition, and which, perhaps, never were in a much better state; but at my table, the first crosses of South Down with Spanish have not been distinguished from the whole breed of the former.

The importation of Spanish sheep has much decreased: yet in the year, ending the 31st of December, 1811; 781 were imported into Bristol.

I am of opinion that superfine wool will be in much greater demand than ever it has been, and I do not

know from whence an adequate supply can be derived hereafter. Nor does it appear to me to be prudent to discourage a breed of sheep, becoming every day more necessary to the country. The consideration of the large sums which might be saved to this country, by raising wool equal in quality to that generally imported, should induce us not to relinquish hastily an object of such importance. Thirty years' attention to the subject leads me to the opinion that it is practicable, and without much stronger proofs than have yet come to my knowledge, I conceive that it would be highly imprudent to stop short in a pursuit, which in the opinion of many, is likely to answer extremely well to those who persevere. The fleece alone of these sheep is often worth more than both fleece and carcass of a great proportion of the sheep of the United Kingdom. The policy of our enemy is far different from that of abandoning the establishment of Spanish flocks in France; it seems to be one of his objects to make that country the emporium for superfine Wools.

In Ireland the growth of Spanish wool is cultivated with great spirit, sells at very high prices, and the cloths made of it are excellent. The public sale for this year has not yet taken place, but the Farming Society at Dublin has in store between 6 and 7000 fleeces of Merino, and Merino and South Down crosses, and

some native Wicklow, for which very good prices are expected. At the sale of wool at the Cork Institution, on the 24th of last month, South Down sold from 3s. 6d. to 5s. 8d. per lb. (Mr. Aldworth); Merino from 7s. 5d. to 10s. 7d. per lb. (Mr. Barry); Crosses of Merino from 3s. 1d. to 7s. 7d. per lb. (Lord Doneraile). But how it happens that the value of the same kinds of wool is so much depressed in this country, the first in the world for the woollen manufacture, while they obtain such an encouraging price in Ireland, where the manufacture is not carried to a great extent, is incomprehensible, and such a mystery as cannot easily be unravelled. In Ireland there is not generally a middle man, in that trade, between the grower and the manufacturer. The Irish manufacturer may have some partiality for the produce of his native country, and may, perhaps, sometimes have gone beyond its value; but it is difficult to believe that, at repeated sales of so large a number of fleeces, the general average was beyond what they were fairly worth to the manufacturer. If worth so much to an Irish, why not to an English manufacturer? Either the stapler or the manufacturer takes a great advantage! Yet of all middle men, the stapler seems to be the most necessary, because, if the manufacturer buys the wool in the fleece, he purchases parts which he does not want, and though the South Down fleece is the most even,

yet there are parts of it which will not suit any one kind of manufacture.

From 12 to 15,000 Spanish sheep have been landed in North America; the prices of the rams have been as high as in England, and it is declared that the imported Merinos are very hardy, and bear the climate (of Connecticut) better than the native sheep; that the lambs are strong, and only covered by a shed; that the ewes on an average give 6lbs. and the rams 11lbs. of wool, which sells for 5s. 1d. per lb; that 13 millions of pounds of wool were shorn in the American States in 1811; and that 17 millions of yards of cloth were made in the same year, and sold very extravagantly, from seven to nine dollars per yard; as appears from the accounts of the American Societies for encouraging Agriculture, &c. But I am informed, the experiment, in respect to Spanish sheep, does not prosper; and the specimens of cloth I have seen were very bad. However, English wool is not very likely to suffer from the competition of that article grown in the Northern States, such as Connecticut, &c. where the snow lies four or five months in the year: at least, in this country, we could not afford to keep sheep on hay for such a length of time.

The spirited and intelligent exertions of Mr.

Webb Hall, of Sneyd Park, near Bristol, must tend essentially to establish an adequate or fair price for wool of the Spanish breed grown in the United Kingdom. He has erected large and commodious buildings for washing and sorting wool; and also a lambing-house capable of receiving from 1500 to 2000 ewes commodiously. He washes and sorts the Merino wool according to the Spanish method; and the importers of that article agree in opinion, that no wool, coming from Spain, is so well sorted and prepared as at Mr. Hall's. The want of this method of washing, sorting, and preparing the Merino wool grown in England, occasioned great difficulty in the sale of it; and, when disposed of in the fleece, the price was much inferior to that of wool of the same quality coming from Spain.

Mr. Hall, with his usual spirit, endeavours to introduce the same method in other parts of the Kingdom: he is well situated, near Bristol, which from its neighbourhood to the cloathing counties, should be the grand mart for the sale of superfine wools.*

* Mr. Hall has 2000 ewes, and during the month of September (1812) he sold his sorted wools for £2000. and upwards. His pure Merino, washed on the back of the sheep, obtained from 5s. to 6s. 6d. per lb.

The object of these details is, to give such a view to our foreign and domestic trade, in wool and woollens, as may enable us to judge of the value of both. I shall now add the prices given at the late fairs in different parts of the kingdom. At Monmouth, Ryeland wool sold at 2s. 3d. per lb. At Hereford, the price was better, the common Ryeland sold from 2s. 10d. to 3s. 1½d. per lb.; Merino crosses from 3s. 7d. to 5s. 0½d. per lb. At Ross Fair, Ryeland wool sold at 3s. 2½d. per lb.; no Spanish or Anglo-Merino wools were offered for sale. In Cheshire, wool grown on Delamere Forest has been sold from 2s. 6d. to 3s. per lb. Mr. Wilbraham sold at 2s. 9d. per lb. part mixed Merino, but rather more than five parts in six South Down wool. One half mixed Merino, the other half South Down, sold at 3s. 6d. per lb. Another flock of mixed Merinos and Ryeland, with a few fleeces of real Spanish, at 4s. 6d. per lb. The fleeces average 4lb. each.

The sale of wool in those parts had been slack, and the buyers alledged as a reason, that the success of the Allies in Spain will increase the export of wool to this country. At Colchester fair, South Down sold at 2s. 3d.; 2s. 4d.; and 2s. 6d. per lb.; Mr. Western sold at the latter price; and since the fair it has been sold at 2s. 6d. and that price has been refused. At

Thetford, the wool buyers, as usual, were not disposed to buy in the fair: in the evening some was sold at 2s. 3d.: and the Merino crosses at 4s. per lb.;—but, since the fair, there has been a very brisk sale of the best South Down at 2s. 6d. per lb.: Mr. Coke refused that price. The most considerable wool growers in these parts keep back their wool, in expectation that the speculation for the American market, on the suspension of the Orders in Council, will raise the value of it; and this leaves the market in an unsettled state.

I now come to the most disagreeable part of my business, that is, to give an opinion respecting the value of our wool. It appears from the statements I have laid before you, that, notwithstanding the unprecedented, adverse, and acrimonious conduct of the enemy, and the accumulation of difficulties occurring at the same time, the general trade of the British empire has prospered beyond example: that every temporary decline of trade, in particular branches and to particular countries, has been most amply compensated by a great increase in other branches, and an increase of exports to other countries; that, however the variations and change of direction in trade may for a time, diminish profits or distress individuals; such are the energies of our commercial men, that

new channels are soon struck out, manufactures are varied, and new ones adopted; that commerce seems readily to recover, and every diminution of export is fully made up on an average of a very few years. It has been remarked how inconsiderable a proportion of the whole of our manufactures is exported to foreign parts; and that the want of employment often arises from an overstock of particular manufactures, and glutted markets abroad; from all which we may draw this comfortable conclusion, that we are not liable to be essentially hurt by the machinations of the enemy against our commerce, and that we have little to fear in respect to commerce, except from party spirit and from our own mistakes. I cannot, therefore, admit that there is any reason for a reduced price of wool, unless it may be that the market is overstocked with the article; but, even in that case, we cannot put the price for the best wool below what has been given almost generally in other counties for South Down wool, certainly inferior to our best. At the same time I should observe, it is generally said that speculations, in consequence of the suspension of the Orders in Council, had already raised woollens from 15 to 20 per cent.

I have mentioned that Mr. Western, of Essex, has sold at 2s. 6d. per lb.: Mr. Coke, and others, have

refused that price. Since Thetford fair there has been a brisk sale for South Down at 2s. 6d. per lb.

There is such a difference in the quality of our wool, that it would be ridiculous to name an uniform price; therefore, after consultation with those most capable of judging, my opinion is, that the price should be from 2s. to 2s. 6d. per lb. which puts the lowest price at 3d. per lb. less than the lowest I have heard of at any of the fairs. And I am clearly of opinion, that there is a difference of at least 6d. per lb. between our best and our worst fleeces.

I must add, that I put the prices so low in consideration of the stock of foreign wool now in this country; of the possible effects of the late bankruptcies; and of the insulting hostile temper of a prevailing party in the American States, which no forbearance—no concession, will conciliate; and with which, if we longer temporize, we shall deserve all the consequence of want of firmness, and of that conduct which alone can maintain the power and preserve the safety of the empire.

N. B. Since the fair, a considerable quantity of inferior wool has been sold at 2s. per lb.; but the prin-

cipal wool growers seem determined not to take less than 2s. 6d. per lb. for their best wool, which, it is probable, they will obtain, when the real state of our trade is well understood.

capital wool growers seem determined not to take less than 2s. 6d. per lb. for their best wool, which, it is probable, they will obtain, when the real state of our trade is well understood.

equal wool growers seem determined not to take less than 2s. 6d. per lb. for their best wool, which, it is probable, they will obtain, when the real state of our trade is well understood.

Holroyd, John Baker,

On the trade in wool and woollens

Dublin 1813

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